MRS CAT'S SUMMER HOLIDAY

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When summer came Mrs Tabby Cat decided to take her kittens away for a holiday in the country. Her kittens were delighted and they danced about in excitement.

But Mrs Tabby was already thinking about all the packing which would have to be done. She put all the luggage into a wheelbarrow, and then she discovered that there was no room for the kittens. So she had to start all over again!

But at last they were ready and they all set off. Mrs Tabby pushed the wheelbarrow very carefully, for she did not want the kittens to fall out and hurt themselves.

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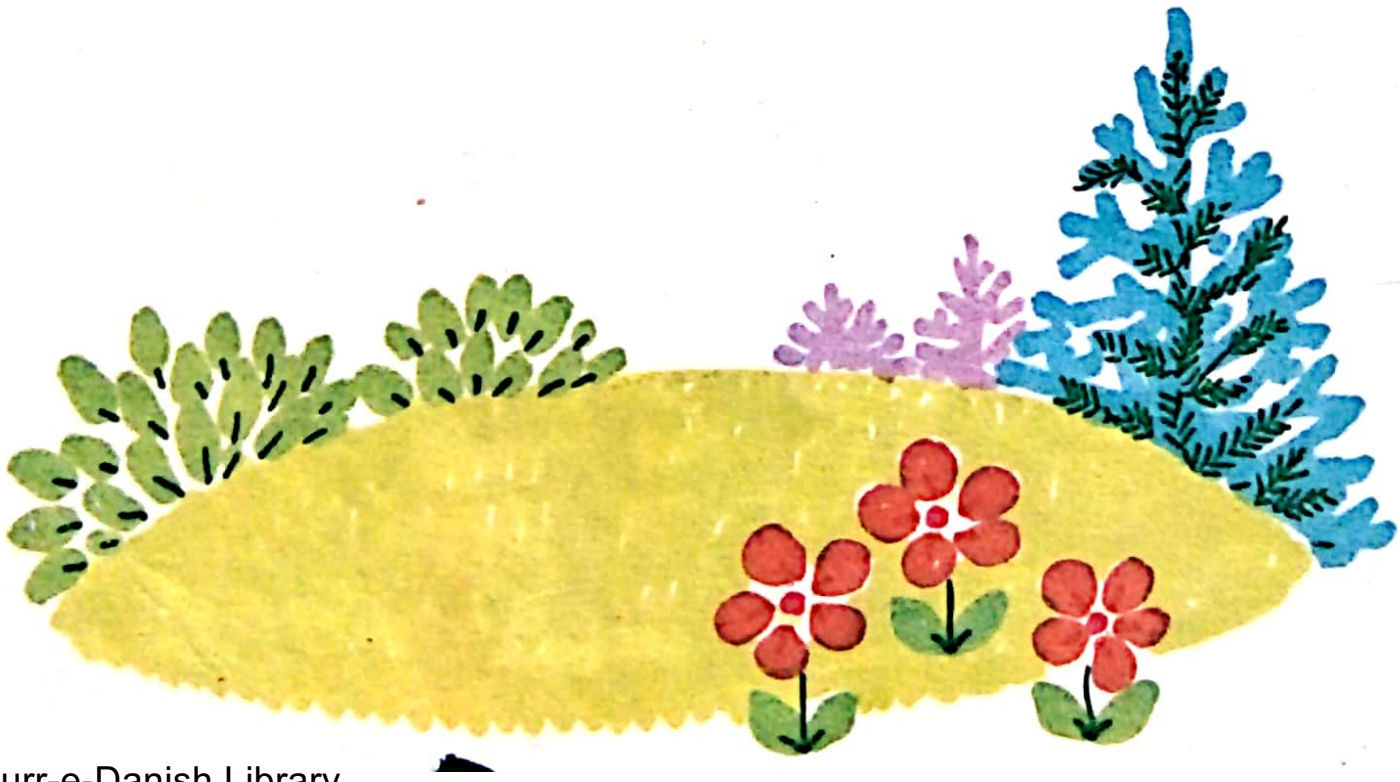
The journey to the country was very long and difficult. The wheelbarrow overturned fourteen times and Mrs Tabby had to put the packages and the kittens back each time that they fell out. But at last they arrived safe and sound.

The mice who lived in the house all the year round were there to welcome them and to help with the luggage.



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Mrs Tabby opened all the windows and lit a fire in the stove to get rid of the winter dampness.

The air in the house already smelt much sweeter. The kittens were told to roll up the carpets, but somehow they always managed to roll up a mouse as well! They thought this very funny!

Mrs Tabby scrubbed the floor and the mice dusted the skirting boards and every nook and cranny in the house. When they had finished they were all as black as soot!

But there was plenty of hot water from the stove and soon everyone was clean once again.

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Mrs Tabby set to to provide a meal and soon the house was filled with the delicious smell of cooking.

Everyone had not eaten for a long time because they had been so busy, but now the mice and kittens realised that they were all very hungry.

"How lovely it is to have our first meal in our own house in the country!" cried the kittens as they sat down at the table.

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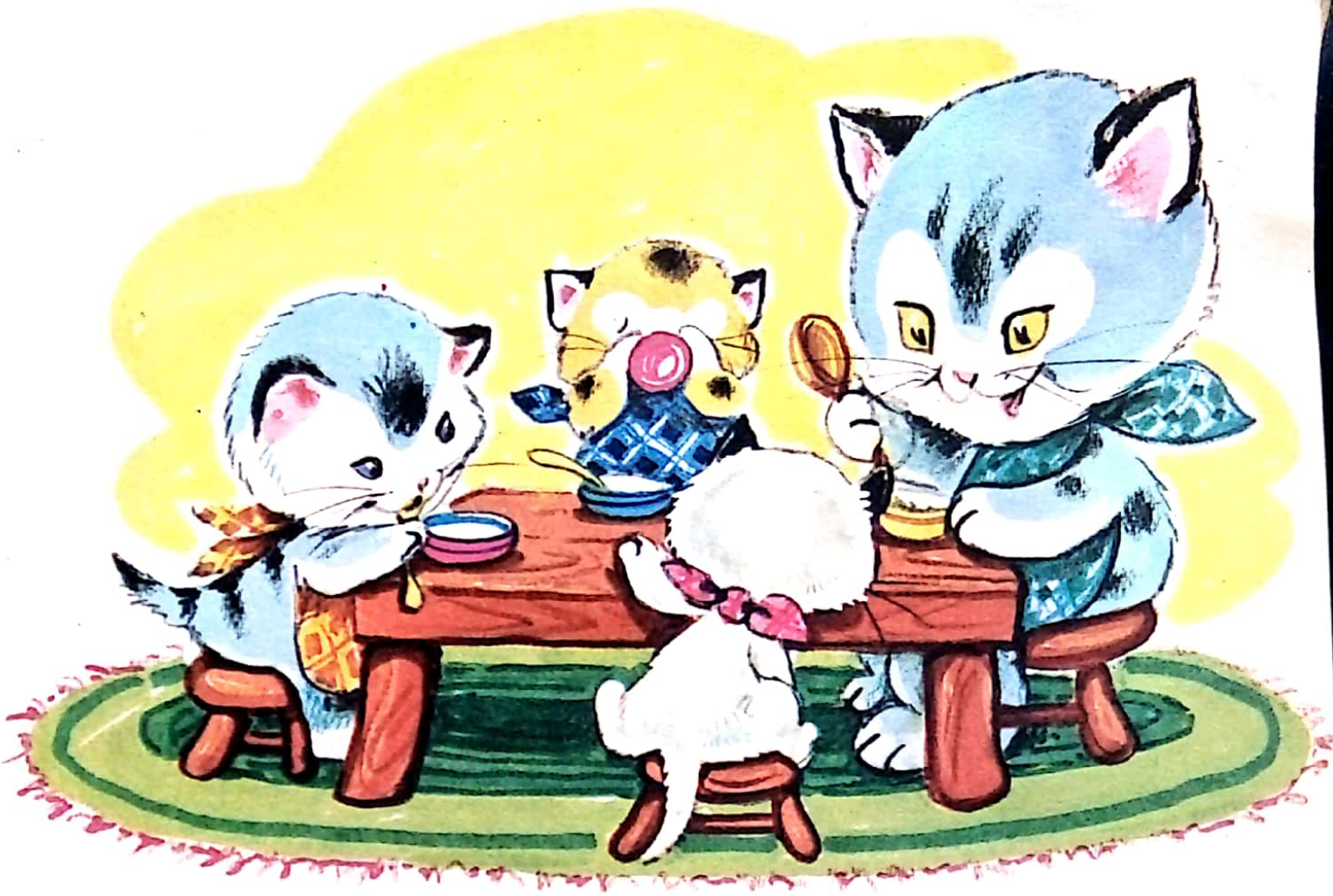

"It is all the hard work that has made you all so hungry," laughed Mrs Tabby, as she gave the mice a large bowl of their favourite cheese to eat. "Thank you all for helping me."

"Thank *you*, Mrs Tabby, ma'am, for this delicious cheese," cried the mice politely. "This is the best meal that we have had for many a long day!"

And then for the first time since Mrs Tabby and her family had arrived at their country house there was complete silence . . . everyone was too busy eating to talk!

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When everybody had eaten all they could, the kittens and mice helped Mrs Tabby to clear the table and to wash the dishes. The mice picked up every crumb because they did not wish the house to look untidy again after all their hard work.

Then the little kittens and their mice friends went into the yard to look for the poultry. They wanted to say hello to the cock and his hens and all their little chickens.

As it was hot the hens were out of their coop and they stood about to make sure that their chicks did not stray too far away.

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Just as the kittens and mice arrived, the mother hens were searching for some lost eggs. Whenever they laid their eggs outside, they often forgot where they had put them.

The mice and the kittens offered to help to search for the missing eggs, and even the little chicks wanted to help too. They all formed a long line and set off through the long grass.

"We must look a funny sight!" laughed the last little chick in the line.

But the kittens were delighted when they found one of the missing eggs hiding in the grass near some flowers.

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But all too soon the kittens heard their mother calling to them that it was getting near bathtime. The mice and the baby chicks begged to be allowed to have a bath too.

So Mrs Tabby filled three different-sized bowls full of water, and took them out into the garden. The largest bowl was for her kittens, the smallest one was for the mice, and the not-too-big, not-too-little bowl was for the chickens.

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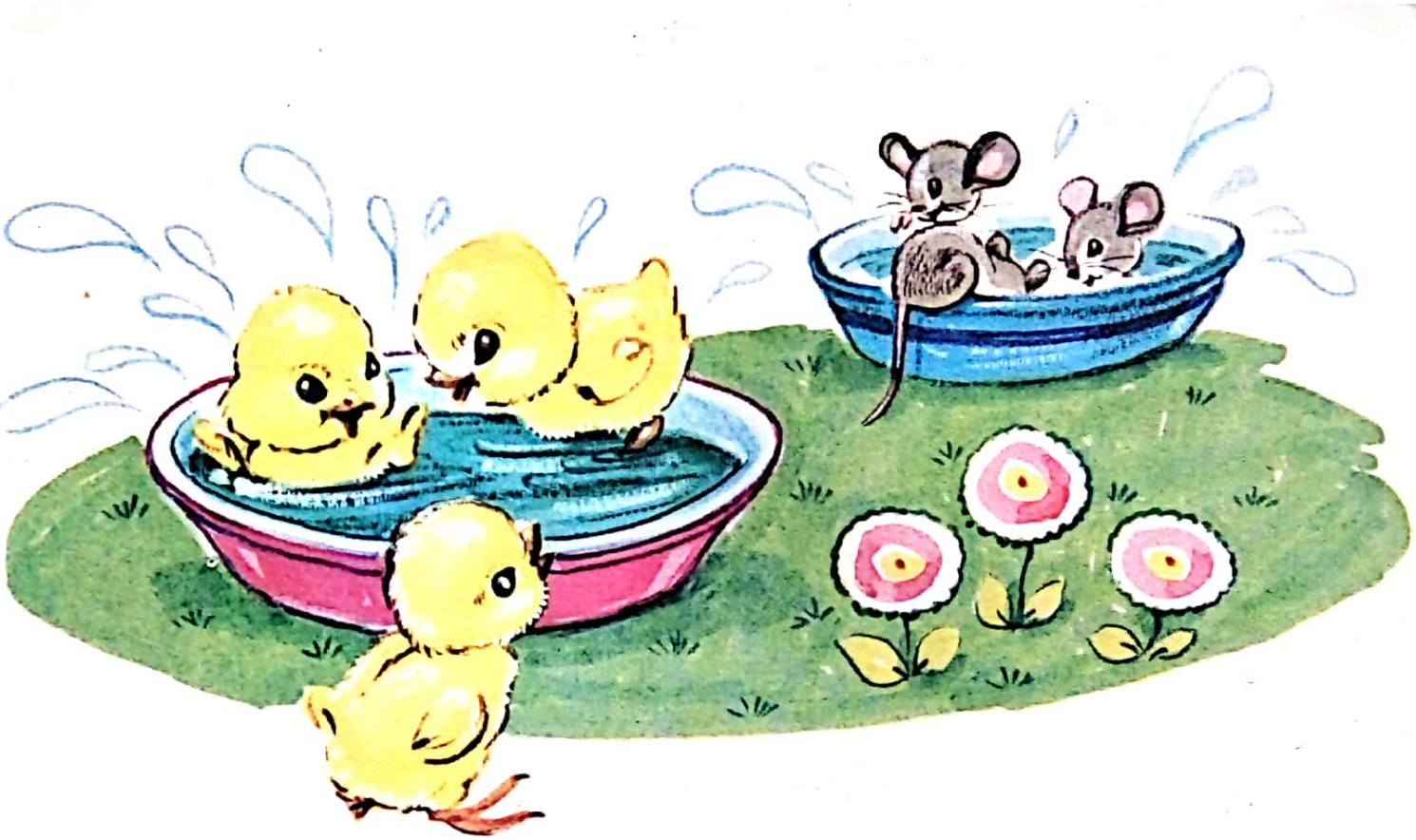

They all jumped into the water with a big splash! Oh, what fun it was having a bath out-of-doors in summer!

They all splashed each other in delight and played all kinds of lovely games. Mrs Tabby just could not get them out of the baths at all!

At last Mrs Tabby was forced to go and seek the help of the mother hens and the mother mice.

"It is turning rather chilly now that the sun is going down," she explained. "And I do not want any of our children to catch cold."

"Leave the chicks and baby mice to us," the other mothers replied firmly. "Do not worry, we will get them out of the water."

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As soon as they saw their mothers approaching, the chicks and mice sprang out of the bowls, and started to dry themselves by running about.

But the mother mice led their children back to their homes in the skirting boards, and the hens made their chicks form up into a neat line, and then they marched them back to the hen coop.

"Out you three come!" cried Mrs Tabby, seizing her kittens by the scruff of their necks and dragging them out of the water. "You don't want to spend your holiday in bed with a cold, do you?"

She wrapped each of her kittens in a warm towel. Mischief had a green towel, Minx a pink towel and Jinks had a blue towel.

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"Be sure to dry yourselves well," urged Mrs Tabby, as she shepherded her children quickly into the house.

When the kittens were all dry and warm once more, they all started to yawn.

"It's clearly time for bed," chuckled their mother. "Come along, my little ones. You'll like sleeping in this nice big bed."

And it *was* a big bed for three small kittens!

It had a lovely patchwork quilt on the top, and when the three little kittens had snuggled down under the quilt, they begged their mother to tell them a story.

The bed was just right for listening to exciting stories in, so Mrs Tabby began to tell them the story of an old sea captain who had had many exciting adventures around the world.

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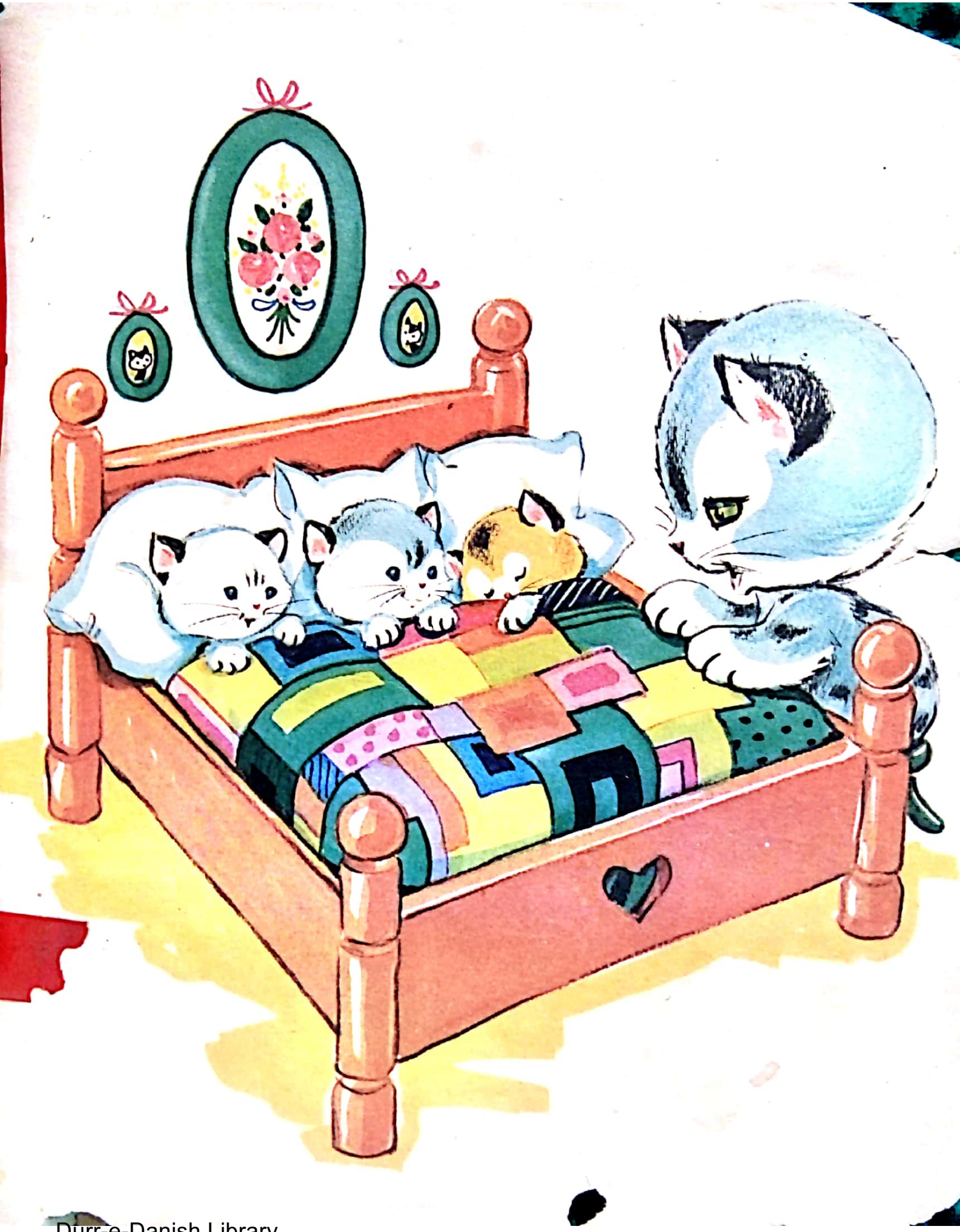

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But soon one little kitten had fallen asleep, and long before Mrs Tabby had come to the end of the brave captain's adventures, all the kittens were fast asleep.

"Goodnight, my little ones," murmured Mrs Tabby, as she crept softly out of the room.

Later, sitting in a comfortable chair by the window, Mrs Tabby Cat watched the sun sinking slowly out of sight.

She had had a long tiring day, but as she looked round her neat tidy house, Mrs Tabby sighed happily.

"I am sure that we are all going to have a lovely time here in the country," she said to herself softly. "My kittens have made lots of new friends, and they will be able to have great fun together."

And feeling very happy and contented with life, Mrs Tabby Cat went off to bed to dream of all the wonderful holiday days ahead.

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